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I. SPURIOUS RELIGIOUS EXCITEMENTS.

It is believed all thoughtful Christians are alive to the fact that religious excitements, which consist of temporary movements of the emotions devoid of any saving operation of the Truth on the reason and conscience, are equally frequent and mischievous in America. This judgment not seldom expresses itself in very queer and inaccurate forms. Thus: good brethren write to the religious journals grateful accounts of a work of grace in their charges, and tell the Editor that "they are happy to say, the work has been purely rational and quiet, and attended by not the slightest excitement." They forget that the efficacious (not possibly, tempestuous) movement of the feelings is just as essential a part of a true religious experience, as the illumination of the intellect by divine truth; for indeed, there is no such thing as the implantation of practical principle, or the right decisions of the will, without feeling. In estimating a work of divine grace as genuine, we should rather ask ourselves whether the right feelings are excited; and excited by divine cause. If so, we need not fear the most intense excitement. This misconception is parallel to the one uttered by public speakers, when they assure hearers that, desiring to show them the respect due to rational beings, and to use the honesty suitable to true patriots, "they shall make no appeal to their feelings, but address themselves only to their understandings." This is virtually impossi-

Schools and of the Correspondence School. Shall it not rather be continued upon a broader basis, with larger plans? In view of what has been done, and of what possibly may yet be accomplished, is not the question, viz: What shall be the future of the American Institute of Hebrew? one worthy of the consideration of every man who is interested in the cause of scientific Biblical study?

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THE PSEUDO-SCIENTIFIC VIEW OF MIRACLES.

In the May Number, 1887, of the *Homiletic Review*, appeared an interesting and suggestive article entitled "The Miraculous Element in the Egyptian Plagues," by Rev. A. J. Lyman, of Brooklyn, New York. This article has quite enough of vivid thought, and of eloquence of a certain kind, to make it acceptable to cultured readers. But this very fact makes it desirable that an earnest protest against its central teachings shall be at once entered, and that the real tendency of those teachings shall be plainly shown, lest we drag the anchors of our faith, and begin to drift toward a lee-shore, under a heavy and disastrous norther.

Rev. Mr. Lyman finds fault with the settled beliefs of the Church and of the soundest scientific Christian learning as to "miracles." He expresses his dissent from those beliefs in the following words: "This, then, is the real question. Can a God who works in the occasional outburst of miracle, be identified as the *same God as He who at the same instant and in the same place*, is also working according to the invariable power and sequence of natural law? This is the real question, and it rules out at once that antique (would we could say obsolete) definition of a miracle which seems formed expressly for easy manipulation by our scientific opponents, viz: that a miracle is an event contrary to, or in suspension of the laws of nature. That definition is about the worst boomerang that ever became mixed up with the true weapons of faith. It hurts nobody except the person who throws it. Because, if God be in nature in any strong and steady way, as we insist that He is, why, then, it is not *Nature* that is Suspended, contravened and set aside when a miracle occurs, according to this definition, but it is *God in Nature* that is

so contravened and set aside, and this is a very serious thing to say, for how can God set aside God? And the more honor we put upon God as actually living in His own world, immanent and operative, the sharper becomes the back-stroke of the boomerang, when we define a miracle as calling for a stoppage of that invariable and immanent energy." p. 375.

Having thus set aside the established belief of the Christian world as a dangerous and deceptive "boomerang" always ready, by its "back-stroke" to return and overthrow its inventors and employers, Rev. Mr. Lyman proceeds, with a smiling complacency, admirable in its way, to give us his view of nine out of ten of the "Egyptian plagues." For the purposes of this article it is entirely unnecessary to say anything of his exposition of the water turned into blood, the frogs, the lice, the flies, the murrain upon the cattle, the boils upon human bodies, the storm and hail, the locusts and the darkness over all Egypt, except in Goshen, where "the children of Israel had light in their dwellings." It is due to him to acknowledge that he has given us some ingenious thoughts, and not very familiar facts, which may do good and can do no harm unless they be perverted to the general purposes of his theory concerning miracles. But, it will be observed that the learned expounder of the "plagues" touched very lightly on the *tenth* plague—that fearful miracle of "the death of all the first-born" of the Egyptians. He evidently felt that that plague did not suit his theory and could not be reconciled with it. Therefore, he touched it only enough to push it out of view; but he could not push it out of existence, and it completely overturns his theory.

Science and Christianity are not hostile to each other. We mean, of course, *true* Science and *genuine* Christianity. "Science falsely so-called," the false science of which Paul wrote eighteen hundred years ago, which he designated then as *TES PSEUDONUMOU GNOSEOS* (1 Timothy vi. 20), and which has been in the world in all ages, may be, and very often is, hostile to Christianity. And, on the other hand, it is equally certain that there is a good deal of pseudo-Christianity in the world, to which true Science is always opposed. But true Science and Scriptural Christianity are never in conflict.

Our esteemed brother, Rev. Mr. Lyman, has evidently adopted the views of false science, as to what he calls "the laws of nature."

The teachings of true Science, on this subject, concur with the teachings of Holy Scripture when interpreted according to the analogy of faith.

These teachings all recognize God—the infinite, eternal and Almighty Spirit—as cause, power, force, in His universe. Matter of itself has no force, no power, no motion. God imparts motion to it; and all other forms of force are but modes of motion. Heat itself which, in the days of false science (and those days were not two hundred years ago) was considered to be a distinct, substantive element in the universe, is now known to be only a mode of motion.

Therefore, what we call the laws of nature are only the ordering and working of God in the universe of matter and spirit. This ordering and working must be, in general, uniform and persistent. If it were not so, this sublime course of Nature would not be the adequate expression of that infinite, calm, and all-seeing knowledge which devises its plans wisely, and suffers no caprice, no fickleness to interrupt its majestic career. And if the course of Nature were not uniform, the rational creatures of God would be rational in vain: neither angels nor men could have exercised the prudence and foresight which was a part of the high virtue that God bestowed on them. Men could not provide for a single day, for those dependent on them. They could not know that the sun will rise to-morrow; that food will nourish the body; that corn sown in the cultivated field will spring up and yield a harvest for bread.

The laws of Nature, therefore, are uniform and persistent in all ordinary cases. This is the fixed belief of genuine Science and of genuine Christianity. We call this uniform course of Nature the *law* which governs her, because it is a rule of action wisely and lovingly imposed on her by her Almighty Creator. The law of gravitation; the law of cohesion; the law of chemical affinity; the law of elemental proportions; the laws of optics, of reflection and refraction, and polarization, and all the laws of generation and growth and development which govern living organisms, and which, when violated, result in disease, and decomposition, and death—all these laws are nothing more nor less than the will of the Omnipotent and Omniscient Spirit, immanent in His created universe, and moulding and controlling its forms according to His own infinitely wise and benevolent attributes. And thus we

reach the question of miracles. If miracles have ever been wrought in this world, what are they, and for what purpose have they been wrought? The answer to this question is not difficult, either to real Science or real Christianity.

For, be it remembered, that true Science and true Religion both admit and insist on the *personality* of God. This is the final test of sound religious thought. The doctrine of the "unknowable Infinite," which, in some one or other of the Protean shapes which modern agnosticism has assumed, is widely diffused in the literature and the thinking of the present day, is really the basis of all the unsound views of miracles that are so persistently urged on us. Agnosticism does not believe in, nor acknowledge a *personal* God. The very utmost concession it will make is that there is immanent in the material entities of the universe, an unknown and unknowable something (whether spirit or matter, agnosticism does not know, and simply cries "ignoramus"), and that this unknown something makes, blindly, but necessarily and continuously, for righteousness and order, and for this purpose is able to impose on the universe *laws*: or, in other words, a course of action which has never been interrupted and never will be, but will go on forever in evolution and development.

Now, in opposition to agnosticism, true Science and Religion believe that God is a *Person* in the highest sense of that word—that He is a Being possessed of intelligence, wisdom, power and will, all infinite—that is, without limit in their application to any subject. That this is the teaching of Holy Scripture, no devout student can deny; and true Science has nothing to say against it; and has admitted it, in the persons of such men as Sir Isaac Newton, Professor Joseph Henry, Matthew F. Maury, Principal Dawson, and many other scientists who have found that true Science does not forbid a man to be a true Christian.

If, then, God be a Person, and if God be the author of the laws of Nature—in other words, the uniform course of Nature—none but the grossly ignorant will deny that God has the *power*, at some special time and place in His universe, to intervene personally, and to arrest or suspend, at that time and place, the law or course of things previously given by Himself. No power less than the power of God can do this, but God has *power* to do so, if He chooses to do so. That He will not choose thus to intervene, and arrest or suspend His own laws, for slight or insufficient

causes, or at frequent intervals of time, may be safely assumed and declared. But that He *can* thus intervene, none but an atheist or an agnostic will deny. And, when a crisis in His providential government of the universe occurs, which renders it fit and becoming and worthy of One infinite in wisdom, goodness and power that He shall thus intervene, we may be sure that He will do so.

Such a crisis would be presented when, in the wise and benevolent ordering of God, it became fit and proper to introduce new beings like angels or men, or a new species of living organism; or to sweep away an effete and hopeless generation in order to start the race of man on a new departure; or to authenticate a new revelation; or to introduce the Son of God to the world with appropriate majesty, even when He came in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin: all these would be crises calling for immediate personal intervention of God in the ordinary course of Nature, at such times and places as His infinite wisdom might elect.

Any such intervention would be a "miracle." It would be an act by which, *at that time and place*, the ordinarily uniform and persistent course of nature would be *arrested* and *suspended*. It would be an irresistible and unanswerable proof that God was there *in person*, or by His personal power; for, no power save His power, could suspend for one moment the course of Nature which He had previously imposed on her. And the very potency and conclusiveness of the proof that God was personally there to authenticate His revelation, or to meet and answer some other grand crisis in the history of this universe, would depend on the fact of there being an actual arrest and suspension, *at that time and place*, of the ordinarily uniform and persistent course of Nature. Nothing less than that would prove the actual presence and power of God, then and there specially exercised, to meet and answer the crisis or to authenticate the mission or revelation from Him.

Therefore, our learned brother, Mr. Lyman, doubtless without intending to do so, has given aid and comfort to Herbert Spencer and his school of agnostics and evolutionists. They will be highly pleased with his notion that, in what he calls "the occasional outburst of miracle," God is, *at the same time and place*, "working according to the invariable power and sequence of natural law." This same *hylozoism* was what Alexander Pope learned from

Bolingbroke, and attempted to foist upon the world in the "Essay on Man." Here is the cloven foot protruding :

" All nature is but art unknown to thee ;
 All chance direction which thou cans't not see ;
 All discord harmony not understood ;
 All partial evil, universal good.
 And spite of pride, in erring reason's spite,
 One truth is clear, whatever is, is right."

We know that this is false. Whatever is, is *not* right. Sin is *not* right. And it has required the personal intervention of the personal God to introduce the only remedy for sin. Agnosticism ignores it, and leaves the sinner without hope.

And when we come to test Rev. Mr. Lyman's theory by the *facts* as to the miracles narrated in Holy Scripture, then his theory is instantly exploded, and vanishes in smoke. Look at that *tenth* plague in Egypt. Assuredly it was a *suspension*, yes, a *contradiction* of all the uniform and persistent laws governing and controlling the phenomena of health and life and death, that *in one and the same night*, in the land of Egypt, the first born child in every Egyptian family should die, and not one child in any Hebrew family should die. It approaches impiety to claim that this was a "working according to the invariable power and sequence of natural law." It was a working in arrest of, and in suspension of, and contrary to "the invariable power and sequence of natural law." It was the act of the angel (the *power* sent immediately by God) who struck down in death the first born in every Egyptian family, and who, seeing the sprinkled blood on the lintels and posts of the doors of the Hebrew dwellings, passed by them and left these families in safety and peace.

Look at the miracle of the axe-head, which fell into deep water, narrated in 2 Kings vi : 5-7. The iron went to the bottom according to the law of gravitation which is uniform and persistent, not only in this world but throughout all the boundless universe of God. What caused that iron axe-head to rise from the bottom and float like a cork on the surface of the water? Manifestly, the immediate power of a personal God, who, then and there, wrought a miracle *contrary to* and *in suspension of* the law of gravity in its application specially to this axe-head. That was the whole extent of the miracle. But it was enough ; it proved that God was there. And it proved it, all the more conclusively, because the "invaria-

ble power and sequence of natural law " were left unchanged—unsuspended as to all other nature around the scene!

And if we take all the great miracles wrought by Christ, " God manifest in the flesh," and attempt to apply Rev. Mr. Lyman's theory to them, we shall speedily find that theory worse than impotent. His talk about the " boomerang " and the " easy manipulation " by which, as he seems to suppose, the fixed belief of our blessed religion as to the nature and purposes of miracles has been overthrown " by our scientific opponents," as he is pleased to call them, are specially unfortunate.

Miracles are facts, and therefore capable of being proved by testimony like any other facts. Hume's shallow argument has been, long since, exploded. The very best trained legal minds, like those of Starkie in England, and Greenleaf in America, have demonstrated that human testimony is capable of proving the existence of a miracle so completely that to doubt is far more irrational than to believe. And the miracles, on which our faith stands, are proved by testimony many thousand fold stronger than that which proves any other facts that have ever occurred in this world.

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REASONS FOR REUNION.

I gave in full, in my address before the General Assembly at St. Louis, the reasons that influence me to favor the reunion of the two great branches of our now divided Presbyterian Church. That address was taken down by short-hand reporters, and has been widely published in both the religious and the secular press. And some others have presented to the public condensed statements from the short-hand report of what seem to them to be the reasons by which I support the position which I have taken. Under these circumstances, it is not a matter of wonder that my views have been incorrectly reported in some points, and misunderstood in others. A stenographic report at best is but a photograph of the original address, the shadow of a substance. The representation of one's views made by others from such a report is but a pencil sketch of the photograph, a shade of the shadow of the original substance. In this way words have been put in my mouth which I never used and arguments have